

Message Text

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ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCS-03 SCA-01
L-03 H-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07
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R 190555Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8376
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONGEN HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU
DIA WASHDC
JCRC BARBERS PT HAWAII

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 1429

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CASC, VS
SUBJ: AMERICANS IN VIET-NAM

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C) 76 BANGKOK 26635 D) BANGKOK 193

SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY SUBMITS A COMPILATION OF REPORTS FROM

RECENTLY ARRIVED VIETNAMESE REFUGEES OF SIGHTINGS OF AMERICANS.
OF GREATEST INTEREST IS THE REPORT THAT A YOUNG AMERICAN DIED
IN SAIGON'S CHI HOA PRISON ON JULY 26, 1976. END SUMMARY.

1. VIETNAMESE REFUGEES CONTINUE TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF
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AMERICANS OR PERSONS THOUGHT TO BE AMERICANS IN SOUTHERN VIET-
NAM. WHEN ICRC REPS REINTERVIEWED MRS. NGUYEN THI VY JAN 12
CONCERNING STORY OF AMERICANS SHE SAW SOON AFTER THEY WERE
TAKEN PRISONER IN THE PHAN RANG AREA (REFS A AND B), SHE
PRESENTED HER SISTER, MRS. NGUYEN THI THI, FORMERLY EM-
PLOYED BY A NUMBER OF U.S. UNITS IN QUI NHON AREA. MRS.
THI'S STORY WAS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST.

2. MRS. THI NOTED THAT SHE HAD A FRIEND, EX-ARVN LT. NGUYEN TRONG HIEU, WHOM SHE VISITED AT CHI HOA TWICE WHILE HE WAS HELD THERE FOR AN UNSPECIFIED REASON. ONE OF HIEU'S CELLMATES WAS AN AMERICAN. DURING ONE VISIT MRS. THI TALKED WITH THE AMERICAN AND SHARED SOME FOOD WITH HIM BECAUSE HE APPEARED TO BE STARVING. SHE DID NOT REMEMBER HIS NAME, ALTHOUGH SHE HAD BEEN TOLD IT. HE WAS APPROXIMATELY 5 FEET 8 INCHES TALL, WITH VERY SLENDER BUILD, FULL HEAD OF LONG BROWN HAIR, FULL BEARD AND MOUSTACHE OF DARKER COLOR, AND PERHAPS 27 YEARS OLD, ALTHOUGH BECAUSE OF HIS EMACIATED CONDITION HE LOOKED VERY OLD. HE WAS MISSING ONE FRONT TOOTH, WHICH WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN KNOCKED OUT BY GUARDS DURING ONE OF THE BEATINGS HE UNDERWENT DURING THE EIGHT MONTHS HE WAS HELD CAPTIVE. MRS. THI RECALLED THAT HE HAD WORKED FOR ICCS, AS SHE HAD ALSO WORKED FOR ICCS FOR AWHILE. SHE THOUGHT SHE HAD SEEN HIM PREVIOUSLY, PERHAPS DRIVING A JEEP, BUT WAS NOT CERTAIN WHERE. WITH A VOICE SHE DESCRIBED AS HAVING A RATHER HIGH PITCH, HE HAD TOLD HER DURING THEIR BRIEF CONVERSATION IN THE PRISON THAT HE WAS SINGLE, LIVED IN TENNESSEE, AND VERIFIED THAT HE HAD WORKED FOR ICCS.

3. MRS. THI LAST SAW THE AMERICAN WHEN SHE VISITED HIEU JULY 25, 1976, THE DAY BEFORE HIEU WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON. AT THAT TIME THE AMERICAN WAS LYING DOWN ASLEEP IN THE CELL. HIEU TOLD HER THE AMERICAN WAS SO SICK AND WAK FROM LACK OF FOOD THAT HE COULD NO LONGER STAND UP. WHEN HIEU WAS RELEASED ON JULY 26, HE TOLD MRS. THI THAT THE

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AMERICAN HAD DIED THAT VERY MORNING. MRS. THI THOUGHT THE AMERICAN WAS PROBABLY BURIED IN THE VICINITY OF CHI HOA.

4. ACCORDING TO MRS. THI, HIEU ESCAPED BY BOAT PROBABLY IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER, SAILED TO SINGAPORE, AND THEN ON TO AUSTRALIA. HIEU'S RELATIVES CONFIRMED TO HER THAT HE WAS IN AUSTRALIA BEFORE SHE HERSELF LEFT VIET-NAM.

5. COMMENT. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, AN ICRC OFFICIAL TOLD EMBASSY SEPTEMBER 23 THAT HE HEARD IN MID-AUGUST THAT AN AMERICAN HAD DIED SHORTLY BEFORE IN CHI HOA. HE SUSPECTED THAT THE AMERICAN WAS AMCIT TUCKER GOUGELMANN, THE ONLY AMERICAN HE KNEW FOR CERTAIN WAS IN CHI HOA (REF C). GOUGELMANN IS MUCH OLDER, OF COURSE, THAN THE MAN MRS. THI DESCRIBED. HER REPORT BRINGS INTO QUESTION THE ICRC OFFICIAL'S CONJECTURE THAT IT WAS GOUGELMANN WHO DIED. IF HIEU CAN BE LOCATED IN AUSTRALIA, HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY MORE ACCURATELY HIS DECEASED AMERICAN CELL-MATE. END COMMENT.

6. COUNSUL SONGKHLA REPORTS THAT A REFUGEE NAMED NGUYEN VAN DOAN, WHO ARRIVED FROM VIET-NAM DEC 25 AND HAS SINCE BEEN ACCEPTED TO GO TO FRANCE, ASSERTED THAT THREE AMERICANS WERE BEING HELD PRISONER IN FORMER PHUOC TUY PROVINCE AS LATE AS JANUARY, 1976. DOAN, A FORMER POLICEMAN, LIVED IN THE TOWN OF BA RIA IN THAT PROVINCE FROM MARCH, 1975, UNTIL HE LEFT THE COUNTRY, WORKING AS A FISHERMAN. IN MAY, 1976, HE MET ANOTHER FISHERMAN, HAI GAN, IN BA RIA. HAI GAN DESCRIBED HIS CAPTURE BY THE VC IN LATE 1974 AND IMPRISONMENT FOR ABOUT ONE YEAR IN WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS LONG SON VILLAGE, LONG LE DISTRICT, PHUOC TUY PROVINCE. DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, HE SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME PLANTING SWEET POTATOES. IT WAS ONLY TOWARD THE END OF HIS INCARCERATION THAT HE MET THREE AMERICANS, TALL CAUCASIANS WHO SPOKE ENGLISH, WHO WERE ALSO PLANTING SWEET POTATOES. HAI GAN SAID THEY WERE GUARDED BY ARMED SOLDIERS AND HE WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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UNABLE TO SPEAK WITH THEM PERSONALLY. HE NOTICED, HOWEVER, THAT THEY RECEIVED LARGER RATIONS THAN THE VIETNAMESE PRISONERS. SHORTLY BEFORE HE LEFT VIET-NAM ON DECEMBER 12, 1976, DOAN ASKED HAI GAN IF HE WAS SURE OF HIS STORY, AND GAN SAID THAT HE WAS.

7. THE EMBASSY REPORTED IN REF D THE ARRIVAL IN BANGKOK FROM SAIGON DEC 23 OF THE LE HO SHUE FAMILY. AFTER REMAINING HERE FOR PROCESSING, THEY WENT TO THE U.S. ALTHOUGH THEY MENTIONED NOTHING OF AMERICANS TO EMBOFFS, AMCIT BROTHER WHO STAYED ON HERE BRIEFLY, VINCENT LEE OF 298 PALMER DRIVE, LOS ANGELES, SAID FAMILY CLAIMED THERE WERE SOME FIFTEEN AMERICANS IN SAIGON, ABOUT TEN OF WHOM WERE BLACK. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION, LEE TOLD EMBOFF HIS RELATIVES REPORTED THAT AMERICANS WERE LIVING IN CHOLON AND IN AREA CLOSE TO FORMER 7TH DAY ADVENTIST HSOPITAL. THREE OR FOUR WERE LOCATED BEHIND THE MARKET AT THE END OF TRAN HUNG DAO STREET. LEE'S BROTHER MET A BLACK AMERICAN IN A BAR OFF TRAN HUNG DAO IN APPROXIMATELY EARLY DECEMBER, 1976. THE AMERICAN TOLD HIM HE DOES NOT WANT TO RETURN TO THE U.S. THE BROTHER LATER SPOKE WITH A GIRL WORKING AT THE BAR, WHO SAID THERE WERE SOME FIFTEEN AMERICANS, MOSTLY DESERTERS, IN THE AREA.

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L-03 H-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07
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R 190555Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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/AMEBASSY VEINTIANE 9968
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SHE NOTED THAT SOME WERE MARRIED TO VIETNAMESE, HAD CHILDREN, AND WANTED TO STAY. LEE SAID HIS BROTHER CALIMED HE SAW FIVE OR SIX AMERICANS HIMSELF SINCE THE AUG 1 UNHCR EVACUATION. (HE DID NOT SAY HOW HE KNEW THEY WERE AMERICANS.) ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNISTS WERE LETTING THEM STAY, HE SAID THEY WERE NOT GIVEING THEM RATION CARDS, AND THEY HAD TO LIVE AS BEST THEY COULD. HE PREDICTED THAT THEY WOULD HAVE A HARD TIME IN THE FUTURE.

8. FINALLY, A REFUGEE NAMED NGO QUOC TAI, WHO HAS NOW DEPARTED FOR THE U.S., REPORTED THAT A WOMAN WHO LIVES WITH HER SISTER, SAIGON ACTRESS MONG TUYEN, TOLD HIM LAST AUGUST THAT SHE HAD JUST RETURNED TWO DAYS PREVIOUSLY FROM LOCATING AND MEETING HER HUSBAND IN A RE-EDUCATION CAMP AFTER ALMOST A YEAR'S SEARCH. NOT FINDING HER HUSBAND AMONG A GROUP OF OFFICERS RELEASED IN TAM QUAN IN
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THE NORTHEASTERN CORNER OF FORMER BINH DINH PROVINCE, SHE BEGAN WALKING WITH OTHER WOMEN ALONG A TRAIL FROM WHICH THE RELEASED MEN HAD COME, GOING IN A WESTERLY DIRECTION. JUST AFTER PASSING THE LAST OF THREE SMALL LAKES, THE WOMAN SAID SHE WAS STARTLED TO LOOK UP AND SEE A VERY SAD LOOKING "AMERICAN", CARRYING A HEAVY BAG AND ACCOMPANIED BY A GUARD, PASS BY. THE "AMERICAN" DID NOT SPEAK.

THE WOMAN SAID ONLY THAT HE HAD LONG HAIR.

9. THE WOMAN AND THOSE WITH HER SOON ARRIVED AT A RE-EDUCATION CAMP, WHERE SHE FOUND HER HUSBAND. SHE RE-COUNTED THAT, FOR SOME REASON, IN HER NERVOUSNESS ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS SHE TOLD HER HUSBAND WAS OF MEETING THE "AMERICAN" ON THE TRAIL. HE REPLIED, "YES, THERE IS ANOTHER AMERICAN OFFICER IN THE CAMP, ALSO; THERE WERE TWO OF THEM." SHE DID NOT SEE THE SECOND AMERICAN.
WHITEHOUSE

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